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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#)1. Mideast

[1](#)2. Iran

Key stories in the media:

Leading media cited the White House as saying yesterday that President Obama wants Israel and the Palestinians to restart stalled peace talks as soon as possible and that he urged both sides and

Arab states to take steps to advance the process.

Leading media reported that last night Vice PM and Strategic Affairs Minister Moshe Ya'alon issued a statement clarifying his criticism earlier in the week of the Qelites" and the Peace Now movement. His latest remarks come after a meeting with PM Benjamin Netanyahu at the defense compound in Tel Aviv. At the end of the discussion, Ya'alon said that he "recognized the importance of democratic discourse and respecting other opinions." Major media reported that YaQalon told Netanyahu his words had been misunderstood. While Yediot noted that Netanyahu refrained from reprimanding YaQalon, other media differed. Israel Radio reported that Likud Knesset Member Danny Danon suggested that Peace Now be dismantled or even outlawed due to its funding by foreign governments. Danon claimed that Peace Now does not divulge its financial doings on the Internet. Former Peace Now secretary-general Mossi Raz retorted that his movementQs accounts are publicly posted on the Web.

HaQaretz and other media reported that FM Avigdor Lieberman yesterday harshly criticized Sweden's foreign ministry for holding back condemnation for a newspaper article claiming IDF troops killed Palestinian youths and harvested their organs. "Sweden's decision not to interfere with blood libels against Jews is reminiscent of Sweden's non-interventionist stance in World War II," Lieberman said. (HaQaretz said that his comment could embarrass PM Netanyahu, given the fact that Sweden saved Jews during the Holocaust.) Lieberman was commenting on the Swedish government's statement yesterday in which it distanced itself from an angry reaction to the article by Sweden's ambassador to Israel: a statement by the Swedish Foreign Ministry said that the Qcondemnation was solely the judgment of the embassy [in Tel Aviv], and designed for an Israeli audience."

HaQaretz reported that today Lieberman is scheduled to talk over the phone with his Swedish counterpart, Carl Bildt, and demand that Stockholm condemn the article. Israel's Ambassador to Stockholm, Benny Dagan, will meet with Bildt's deputy and raise the same demand. If Sweden refuses to do so, the Foreign Ministry is considering postponing Bildt's visit to Israel, scheduled to take place in 10 days. Senior Foreign Ministry sources are quoted as saying that another plan of action is to turn the visit into a publicized affair that will embarrass Bildt.

Israel Radio reported that the U.S., Britain, France, and Germany are urging the U.N.Qs International Atomic Energy Agency to reveal all the information it has that suggests Tehran is pursuing nuclear weapons. Media reported that Iran has seemingly lifted its ban on allowing IAEA inspectors to nuclear sites.

HaQaretz (Akiva Eldar) reported that a delegation of former global leaders is to arrive in Israel and the West Bank on Monday to garner public support for peace between Israel and its neighbors. The delegation is part of an organization known as the Elders, founded in 2007 by former South African president Nelson Mandela. The purpose of the organization is to utilize the experience of prominent world leaders to support peace-making efforts and dealing with humanitarian problems and human suffering in crisis regions. Due to security concerns, the group had to cancel its visit to the Gaza Strip. The organization said the visit to Gaza was an important priority for them to highlight the situation in the Strip and to call for an end to the Israeli blockade. The delegation will be led by Fernando Cardoso, former president of Brazil, and will include former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate; the South African Bishop Desmond Tutu; former Norwegian PM Gro Brundtland; former president of Ireland and United Nations high commissioner for human rights Mary Robinson; and former Indian parliamentarian and activist for grassroots women's entrepreneurship, Ela Bhatt. The delegation will meet with President Shimon Peres and with senior leaders of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, including PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. The group said their purpose was to encourage the parties to move ahead toward peace and reconciliation, and that they did not intend to fulfill any diplomatic function. They noted that they were aware of the people's disappointment in the region from the failure to achieve peace, although the Israelis and the Palestinians both support a two-state solution. Because they believe there can be no peace without popular support, they will focus during their visit on meetings with young people, business people and independent experts. They said they would listen to the concerns of people on both sides hurt by the conflict.

A correspondent in Washington for the ultra-Orthodox Hamodia interviewed U.S. administration officials and Representative Eric Cantor, and wrapped up views voiced by prominent Americans and Israelis analyzing the reasons for U.S. pressure on Israel.

The Jerusalem Post quoted the Saudi newspaper Al-Watan as saying yesterday that the Saudi Minister of Water and Electricity, Abdullah al-Hosain, said that the kingdom was working on plans for its first nuclear power plan. Israel had no official response to the Saudi minister's announcement.

Haaretz quoted the Norwegian electronic news service Norwatch as saying yesterday that the British investment bank BlackRock has divested from the major Israeli company Africa Israel Investments because of the latter's involvement in construction in settlements, in particular in Maqaleh Adumim.

Haaretz reported that, despite the video footage and the international public outcry it generated, the Judea and Samaria (i.e. West Bank) police are closing the case of a severe beating in June 2008 of three Palestinians by masked settlers, without having managed to produce even a single suspect, according to the complete investigation file obtained by the newspaper.

Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin (Likud) was quoted as saying in an interview with The Jerusalem Post that he will push for direct, regional elections for half the Knesset, and for a constitution.

The ultra-Orthodox Yated Neqeman reported that a new Raytheon-manufactured American anti-missile system could be operational in Israel within four years.

Israel Radio reported on a PA government decision to punish its citizens who publicly breach the Ramadan fast with a three months imprisonment sentence.

Yediot reported that hundreds of Iraqi-born Israelis have already made a pilgrimage to northern Iraq.

An article in The Jerusalem Post suggests that genetic similarities between Jews and Palestinian Arabs could be the key to peace.

Haaretz reported that the U.S.-Israeli businessman and philanthropist Guma Aguiar asserted this week that he was abused by anti-Semitic policemen in Florida, after a newspaper reported that Aguiar had been arrested on charges of driving under the influence and drug possession in Broward County in June. Earlier this week, Aguiar told Yediot that his uncle's family had framed him. Last month, Aguiar invested over \$4 million in support of the cash-strapped Beitar Jerusalem Football Club. Maariv quoted him as saying that one of his great dreams is to build the Third Jewish Temple.

Maariv ran a feature about the economic recovery of New York City, saying that it is more ostentatious than ever.

The Jerusalem Post and Haaretz cited the results of a poll released yesterday and conducted by the Palestinian Center for Police and Survey Research and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Harry S Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace:

- Only 12 percent of Israelis believe that President Obama's policies are supportive of Israel.
- The poll also found that 64 percent of Palestinians still feel Obama's policy is more supportive of Israel, while 40 percent of Israelis think it is more support of the Palestinians.
- The poll found that 59 percent of Israelis believe the Fatah conference showed that Israel does not have a partner for peace negotiations.
- The Jerusalem Post reported that the poll shows that 54% of Israelis oppose the U.S.-backed Saudi peace initiative, while 58% of Palestinians favor it.

Block Quotes:

I. "Out of Context"

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (8/21): QThere is no moral flaw in the decision to cross the lines, to become newly religious or newly secular, to move from left to right or from right to left, to convert one's faith, to stop smoking, or to begin a diet. The problem only comes up when the person who crosses the lines begins to preach morals to others, and like new converts do, becomes holier than the pope, more radical than [Moshe] Feiglin, [the leader of Likud's far-Right's faction]. YaQalon is not an opportunist. He believes in what he says. What he lacks is humility, finesse, sophistication. It seems there are some things that the quartermaster cannot issue. In the forum of six ministers, which in this government plays the role of security cabinet, he has taken an extreme right wing position, to the right of Lieberman, to the right of [Benny] Begin. Begin, from time to time, supports peace process steps, perhaps in the belief that in any case, nothing will come of them, and it is better not to have an unnecessary clash with the U.S. administration; Begin also believes in the rule of law: if an outpost is illegal, it must be removed. YaQalon is presenting the positions of the rejectionist front in the security cabinet, the position that brought the Likud to 12 seats [in 2006].... Netanyahu can take consolation in the fact that YaQalon's positions will help him explain to George Mitchell, in their meeting in London next week, how difficult it is for him to be flexible. Last night he met with YaQalon to reprimand him. It was a pretend reprimand: neither side has any interest in creating a crisis over this affair. YaQalon did not apologize. It seems he was content with saying something along the lines of Qmy words were taken out of context.Q A fairly groundless excuse, but enough. The person who is out of context is YaQalon, never to return.

II. "Verbal Rioting"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (8/21): QViews [such as those of Vice Premier Moshe YaQalon] usually find a voice in leaflets of extremist synagogues or in reckless sermons by religious-national rabbis and speakers, some of whom have urged young men not to serve in the IDF and refuse orders to evacuate settlements. The right wing usually writes them off as QweedsQ with little clout. But Ya'alon, a former chief of staff who has been parachuted into the top political echelon, is no weed. He is deputy prime minister. His decision to adopt the tired attack on the QelitesQ is ridiculous and repugnant. Ya'alon is also a member of the forum of six ministers that is supposed to decide on fateful issues. If Netanyahu settles for a clarification and condemnation rather than immediately removing Ya'alon from decision-making positions, the Israeli public and the rest of the world -- mainly the U.S. administration -- will conclude that such bizarre verbal attacks represent the stance of Netanyahu's government.

III. "YaQalon's Misstep"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (8/21): QThe Prime Minister's Office announced [this week] that QMinister Ya'alon's statements are unacceptable to the Prime Minister, both in substance and in style, and do not represent the government's position.Q Speaking at Bar-Ilan University in June, the Premier outlined the peace policies of this government. He noted that Qin the heart of our Jewish homeland [there] now lives a large population of Palestinians. We do not want to rule over them. We do not want to run their lives.Q He offered to negotiate the creation of a demilitarized state for the Palestinians, insisting that they recognize Israel as a Jewish state and renounce the Qright of returnQ to Israel proper for refugees and their descendants. A pullback to the 1949 Armistice Lines is out of the question. Ya'alon heard that speech -- some reports suggested he participated in drafting it -- and the next day told IDF Radio that he could live with a Palestinian state under the conditions defined by Netanyahu. If he's changed his mind and lost faith in the Prime Minister, the honorable thing to do would be to resign. YaQalon needs to make some tough choices.

IV. "The Feiglinites Will Not Decide"

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in Ha'aretz (8/21): QObama created the impression that he believed the walls of Jericho would fall after his breathtaking speech. Instead of coming to Israel immediately afterward, he dispatched his emissaries who, compared to his grandiose address in Cairo, dealt with minor issues -- yes or no to construction in settlements, enclosing balconies, adding rooms to apartments, and the like. This trivial discussion roused the extremists out of their coma -- the Feiglinites [after Moshe Feiglin, the leader of the Likud's most right-wing faction], headed by Vice Premier Moshe Ya'alon. Chills run down my spine when I think about how this man is Vice Premier and a member of the defense Qouncil of six,Q which makes decisions that affect our lives. But the government responded in kind, verbally at least, to the principles raised by Obama, and it has no reason to recant. The Palestinians' silence mandates a cogent, implementable American peace plan. Otherwise, the Cairo speech will be just another dust-gathering document in the White House archives.

1V. QNetanyahu's Perilous Statecraft

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in The Jerusalem Post (8/21): QIn 1999, the Right brought down the first Netanyahu government and gave Israel Camp David and the Palestinian terror war. There is another way. It is being forged by the likes of Vice Premier Moshe YaQalon on the one hand and former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee on the other. YaQalon argues that not capitulating to American pressure is a viable policy option for Israel. There is no reason to reach an agreement with Mitchell on the administration's bigoted demand that Jews not build in Judea, Samaria [i.e. the West Bank], and Jerusalem. If the U.S. wants a fight with Israel, a fight against American anti-Jewish discrimination is not a bad one for Israel to have. YaQalon's argument was borne out by Huckabee's visit this week to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. Huckabee's trip showed that the administration is not operating in a policy vacuum. There is plenty of strong American support for an Israeli government that would stand up to the administration on the Palestinian issue and Iran alike. Netanyahu's policies have taken a wrong turn. But Netanyahu is not Tzipi Livni or Ehud Olmert. He is neither an ideologue nor an opportunist. He understands why what he is doing is wrong. He just needs to be convinced that he has another option.

12. Iran:

Block Quotes:

"If Iran Sets the Agenda"

Emily B. Landau, Director of the Arms Control and Regional Security program at the Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University, wrote in the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz (8/21): QFrom a regional perspective, the Iranian challenge must be dealt with on its own, without problematic and irrelevant linkages. Iran is not going nuclear because of Israel, and will not become less dangerous if Israel is placed in the limelight. More likely, the opposite will happen. The U.S.-Iran talks will be more challenging because unlike in the Arms Control and Regional Security talks, failure spells an immediate and critical deterioration in regional security. While this is all the more reason for swift action, America's strong interest in reaching a deal with Iran -- alongside Obama's embrace of nuclear disarmament -- could obfuscate the regional picture and render the United States dangerously vulnerable to Iranian rhetoric and pressure. Preparation is essential to avoid this pitfall. Western NPT-based norms that advocate equal treatment of all nuclear states, regardless of their significant differences, must be qualified in light of a hostile regional hegemon. The United States would be well advised to listen carefully to the voices coming from the region, even if they sometimes speak softly.

Regional states understand where the real danger lies, and the urgency of dealing with Iran's regional threats -- as soon as possible.

MORENO